

UA 30/01

Fear for

**COLOMBIA Internally displaced people at the *La Nohora* camp, city of
Villavicencio, Meta department**

Several thousand displaced people are in grave danger after more than a thousand soldiers have arrived to evict them from the camp in central Colombia, where they are sheltering.

Earlier this week approximately 1,200 soldiers entered the *La Nohora* camp in the city of Villavicencio, Meta department, where hundreds of internally displaced families are sheltering. The camp consists of makeshift homes set up by displaced peasant farmers, who have fled their homes in rural areas to escape political violence. It first sprung up in 1999 when 160 families sought shelter in Villavicencio city. Many more have since joined them. The municipal authorities have repeatedly tried to evict the families from the area.

Displaced communities frequently suffer serious human rights violations at the hands of the security forces and their paramilitary allies, who try to silence them and prevent them from bringing their plight to international attention. In October 2000, paramilitary forces reportedly killed at least four displaced people, who had sought shelter in Villavicencio (see UA 325, AMR 23/084/00, 25 October 2000). Forcibly displaced people are often labeled as guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators, thereby providing the security forces and their paramilitary allies with an excuse for targeting them. Organizations working with the displaced communities have also been targeted.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Colombian army and security forces, and their paramilitary allies, commit serious human rights violations with virtual impunity. Over the past five years, several thousand civilians have been killed by paramilitary groups. The Colombian government has suspended the constitutional legal base for the formation of paramilitary organizations, and in 1989 ordered the armed forces to combat and disband such groups. Nevertheless, they continue to operate with the support of the security forces in many areas of the country.

Similarly, armed opposition groups have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law. They have executed people, including members of forcibly displaced communities, whom they accuse of collaborating with or supporting the security forces or paramilitaries.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in Spanish or your own language:

- expressing concern that over a thousand soldiers have reportedly entered the *La Nohora* camp to evict displaced people sheltering there;
- urging the authorities to taking all steps deemed appropriate by those under threat to guarantee their safety;
- calling for a full and impartial investigation into links between the security forces and paramilitary groups operating in the department of Meta, urging that the results are made public, and that those responsible for supporting and participating in such groups are brought to justice;
- urging the authorities to take immediate and decisive action to combat and dismantle paramilitary groups, in line with repeated government commitments and United Nations recommendations.

APPEALS TO:

President of the Republic

Señor Presidente Andrés Pastrana Arango
Presidente de la República
Palacio de Nariño
Carrera 8 No.7-26
Santafé de Bogotá, COLOMBIA

Fax: + 57 1 336 2109 / 337 1351

Salutation: Dear President / Excmo. Sr. Presidente

Minister of Interior

Señor Humberto De La Calle
Ministro del Interior, Ministerio del Interior, Palacio Echeverry
Carrera 8a, No.8-09, piso 2o., Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

Telegrams: Ministro Interior, Bogota, Colombia

Fax: + 57 1 341 9583 / 334 3960

Salutation: Dear Sir / Sr. Ministro

Governor of Meta Department

Alan Jara Urzola
Gobernación de Meta
Carrera 33 N°38-45
Villavicencio, Meta, Colombia

Salutation: Dear Governor / Sr. Gobernador

COPIES TO:

National Advocate for the People

Sr. Eduardo Cifuentes
Defensor del Pueblo, Defensoría del Pueblo
Calle 55, No. 10-32/46, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para Refugiados (ACNUR)
Calle 114 No.9-01 Edificio Teleport Torre A Oficina 601
Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia

and to diplomatic representatives of Colombia accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 16 March 2001.